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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003219

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KIRF](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES WAY FORWARD ON MINORITIES
REPRESENTATION WITH PAPAL NUNCIO

REF: A. BAGHDAD 3160
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 2326

BAGHDAD 00003219 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: By Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: According to the Papal Nuncio to Iraq, Iraq's Christian religious leadership is stunned and distressed over the exclusion of Article 50 from the Provincial Elections Law (PEL), which would have guaranteed minority quotas in provincial councils (Ref A). He noted that Christian leaders have expressed their dismay to the highest levels of the GOI, but admitted that they should have lobbied harder for inclusion of Article 50 before the September 24 vote. He hopes the situation can be saved by having the Council of Representatives (CoR) vote to reinstate Article 50 and asked for Embassy and the Department's support. The Ambassador assured the Nuncio that supporting the political rights of Iraq's minorities is a top U.S. priority. He recommended ensuring minority representation through implementing regulations issued by Iraq's electoral commission or through a separate vote only on Article 50. He urged against a Presidency Council veto of the PEL, as this would delay elections.

[1](#)2. (C) Chullikatt raised the issue of the Chaldean Church receiving compensation for religious sites and facilities used by MNF-I since 2006 (Ref B). He is particularly keen to restore Babel College and Seminary as part of his efforts to draw back to Iraqi Christian clergy currently in Amman, as well as ordinary Christians. End Summary.

Was the Election Law Setback Preventable?

[1](#)3. (C) In a October 2 meeting with the Ambassador, Papal Nuncio Archbishop Francis Chullikatt said that Iraq's Christians had assumed, since no formal objections had been raised during parliamentary debate, that Article 50 would be included in the PEL passed by the parliament on September 24. He believes the lack of public parliamentary discussion of the minority quotas issue contributed to its being struck and hopes the issue can be addressed by having the parliament vote now to reinstate Article 50. Chullikatt asserted that Iraq's minorities will not disappear and will insist on having their rights recognized; ignoring their right to political representation will only create larger problems in Iraq's nation and institution-building process. He asked for the Embassy's and Department's support at this critical juncture.

[1](#)4. (C) Chullikatt told the Ambassador that Chaldean Patriarch Cardinal Emmanuel Delly has written letters to express his dismay to Prime Minister Maliki, President Talabani, Vice Presidents Mehdi and Hashemi, and CoR Speaker

Mashadani. He said Delly also wrote to PM Maliki on behalf of the Council of Christian Leaders of Iraq. Chullikatt agreed with the Ambassador that such energetic action in support of Article 50 before the vote might have prevented this setback, and noted he has said as much to Christian leaders. He expressed hope that the public attention now focused on the issue, including supportive statements issued by PM Maliki and CoR Speaker Mashadani, would work in the minorities' favor.

Two Options for the Way Forward

15. (C) The Ambassador assured Chullikatt that supporting the political rights of Iraq's minorities is a top U.S. priority.

The U.S. is focused on finding a solution that does not unravel the entire law and delay the elections. The Ambassador stressed that the PEL should not be vetoed by the Presidency Council, as called for by some minority representatives. He proposed two options: implementing regulations promulgated by the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) that would establish provincial council seat quotas for minorities, or having a separate vote only on reinstating Article 50. The Ambassador pointed out that the public attention now focused on the PEL and the minority quotas would make it difficult for anyone to oppose redress.

Initiatives to Bring Christians Back

16. (C) Chullikatt raised the issue of the financial compensation the Chaldean Church leadership wants from the U.S. military to restore religious facilities used by Coalition Forces since 2006. (Note: Chaldean Bishop Shlaimon Wardouni, assistant to Chaldean Patriarch Emmanuel Delly,

BAGHDAD 00003219 002.2 OF 002

recently raised this issue directly with U.S. military authorities in Baghdad's Doura neighborhood. End note.) Chullikatt said that he had told Chaldean Patriarch Delly that the amount of compensation requested should be submitted to the military authorities, adding that Delly wrote a letter to the U.S. Army specifying religious facilities requiring renovation as a result of being used as MNF-I quarters. Chullikatt himself is chiefly interested in renovating and reopening Babel College and Seminary as an incentive for teaching staff and seminarians to return.

17. (C) Convinced that Christianity must stay alive and flourish in Iraq, Chullikatt has asked Franciscan sisters and Carmelite monks currently in Amman to come back to their Baghdad convent and monastery. His efforts to encourage ordinary Christians to return to their homes, whether in Baghdad or in northern Iraq, include plans for the Jesuit Refugee Services organization to visit Christian refugees in Amman and eventually, northern Iraq. Chullikatt is also arranging for the Catholic National Migration Delegation to visit Amman, and hopes that they will be able to meet with Ambassador Beecroft.

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